

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6866

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 4861

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP, IR

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF POPULATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

REF: STATE 112325

1. WITH AN ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF 3.2 PERCENT, A STRONG RURAL TO URBAN POPULATION FLOW, AND A PREPONDERANCE OF ITS PEOPLE IN YOUNG AGE GROUPS, IRAN OBVIOUSLY FACES MEDIUM AND LONG RANGE PROBLEMS WITH ITS POPULATION. THE PRESENT GROWTH RATE WILL SURELY PRODUCE A NATION OF 64 MILLION PEOPLE BY 1996 (A DOUBLING TIME OF 22 YEARS OPERATING UPON A CURRENT POPULATION OF 32 MILLION).

2. THE CONSENSUS OF FOREIGN OBSERVERS IS THAT FAMILY PLANNING, THOUGH CONTINUING TO RECEIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, IS NO LONGER CONSIDERED SUCH AN URGENT NECESSITY. THE FAMILY PLANNING DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH HAS BEEN DIVESTED OF CERTAIN SUPPORT SERVICES. PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OF FAMILY PLANNING BY PROMINENT FIGURES HAS BEEN LESS FREQUENT IN RECENT MONTHS. IN FACT, THERE IS A FEELING WITHIN THE COUNTRY THAT IRAN, IN ITS NEW WEALTH, CAN COMFORTABLY ABSORB A LARGER POPULATION. AND IT IS TRUE THAT DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OVER THE NEXT 10 TO 20 YEARS ARE EXCELLENT. PERHAPS ONLY A HANDFUL OF IRANIANS REALIZE THAT A DOUBLING OF PEOPLE WITHIN THIS GENERATION IS INEVITABLE ANYWAY AND THAT A SLOWING OF POPULATION GROWTH THEREAFTER CAN ONLY BE STARTED BY MEASURES TAKEN NOW.

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3. IN THE NEAR TERM THE U.S. DOES NOT FACE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS
STEMMING FROM POPULATION FACTORS IN ITS RELATIONS WITH IRAN, BUT
RATHER, MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES. THERE WILL BE A MODERATE DEMAND FOR
U.S. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND SUBSTANTIAL DEMAND FOR AMERICAN
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS AND TECHNOLOGY, FOR ALL OF WHICH IRAN CAN
PAY. IT ALSO SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT POPULATION FACTORS WILL LEAD
SOON TO DOMESTIC INSTABILITY OR TO DISRUPTIVE INTERNATIONAL BE-
HAVIOR IN WAYS OF CONCERN TO THE U.S.

4. ALTHOUGH SOME STEAM APPEARS TO HAVE GONE OUT OF THE IRANIAN
FAMILYPLANNING PROGRAM, THE NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO REDUCE THE
POPULATION GROWTH RATE REMAINS. THERE IS, ACTUALLY, LITTLE THAT
THE U.S. CAN DO WITHIN IRAN TO PROMOTE INCREASED ACCEPTANCE FOR
FAMILY PLANNING. WE SHOULD, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE
IRANIAN FAMILY PLANNING EFFORT THROUGH PROFESSIONALLY COMPETENT
INTERMEDIARIES, SUCH AS THE CAROLINA POPULATION CENTER, THE
POPULATION COUNCIL, AND THE U.N. FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES
(UNFPA).

5. AT THE PRESENT TIME UNDP OFFICIALS ARE IN TEHRAN, REPORTEDLY
TO SOLICIT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE GOI FOR U.N. PROGRAMS,
AMONG THEM THE UNFPA. WE BELIEVE THIS IS APPROPRIATE AND TIMELY
AND WILL GIVE THE EFFORT WHAT SUPPORT WE CAN.

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